

# **Black History Month 2014: The Native Sons and Daughters of Alabama**

## **Honoring Rev. Abraham L. Woods, Jr. and Bishop Calvin W. Woods**

**February 28, 2014**

Ms. SEWELL of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, in honor of Black History Month, I rise today to continue my commitment to paying tribute to outstanding African-Americans who have made tremendous contributions to the political, economic and social fabric of Alabama and this nation. Today, I am honored to recognize brothers Rev. Abraham Lincoln Woods, Jr. and Bishop Calvin W. Woods, Sr. for their incredible audacity and courage during the darkest days of the Civil Rights Movement.

Rev. Abraham Lincoln Woods, Jr. and Bishop Calvin W. Woods, Sr. were both born in Birmingham, Alabama to Maggie Rosa Lee Wallace Woods, a homemaker, and Rev. Abraham Lincoln Woods Sr., a plant worker and Baptist minister.

In the spring of 1963, Rev. Abraham Woods led Birmingham's first demonstration at a whites-only lunch counter in downtown Birmingham. In the days and weeks following the first sit-in, Rev. Abraham Woods was arrested along with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and other civil rights leaders for confronting Bull Connor. Rev. Abraham Woods had become friends with Dr. King while they were students at Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia and later joined him on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial for his "I Have a Dream" speech in 1963.

Rev. Abraham Woods received a bachelor's degree in theology from Birmingham Baptist College, a bachelor's in sociology from Miles College in Birmingham and a master's in American history from the University of Alabama. He co-founded the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights in 1956 with Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth and served as the director for the Miles College Voter Registration Project.

Thirty-four years after the bombing of Birmingham's 16th Street Baptist Church, Rev. Abraham Woods played a pivotal role in urging the federal government to re-investigate the bombing. The new investigation led to the conviction of two Klansmen. "Even the Klan, as bad as they are," he told the New York Times in a 1997 interview, "you didn't think they would go as far as to bomb a church on Sunday with little children in Sunday school."

While president of the Birmingham chapter of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), Rev. Abraham Woods led protests which were instrumental in integrating country clubs and golf courses in Alabama and across the nation. The P.G.A. had chosen a Birmingham country club as the site for its 1990 Championship. The protests that followed impelled major corporations to withdraw advertising from the tournament which led to the integration of the club.

Rev. Abraham Woods is also remembered as an exemplary educator. He was the first African American to teach American history at the University of Alabama. In 2002, Rev. Abraham Woods retired from Miles College after forty years on its faculty. Upon his retirement, Miles College conferred upon him the Doctorate of Humane Letters. He went on to retire as president of the Birmingham chapter of the SCLC in 2006. He served as pastor of St. Joseph's Baptist Church in Birmingham for thirty-seven years until his death on November 7, 2008 at the age of 80.

Rev. Abraham Woods had an incredible impact on the state of Alabama and this nation in his pursuit of justice. He taught all of us the importance of loving God and living for others.

In 2006, Bishop Calvin Woods succeeded his older brother as president of the Birmingham SCLC and became president of the New Era Baptist State Convention a year later.

Bishop Calvin Wallace Woods, Sr. was born on September 13, 1933 in Birmingham, Alabama. At the age of twelve, he entered Parker High School where he developed a talent for shoe repair and tailoring and a gift for public speaking.

Bishop Calvin Woods graduated from Parker High School in 1950 and went on to earn a B.S. degree in social science and B.D., B.R.E., M.B.S and D.D. degrees from the Universal Baptist Institute, the Universal Baptist Seminary and Birmingham-Easonian Baptist Bible College.

In 1960, Bishop Calvin Woods became pastor of East End Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama. During the 1960's, he was a resolute advocate for the boycott of Birmingham's segregated city bus system. He was sentenced to prison for six months and fined for his leadership in the Birmingham Bus Boycotts. Despite this setback, Bishop Calvin Woods continued his steadfast commitment to the Movement. In 1963, he was arrested and beaten by Birmingham's police for participating in public protests. Again, his dedication to fighting segregation and intolerance in the Deep South did not waver. Bishop Calvin Woods was heavily involved in the 1965 protest of Birmingham's voter registration procedures. He served as the strategy chairman for the protest of the shootings of five black protestors at a Birmingham supermarket.

Today, Bishop Calvin Woods continues to be a guiding light for the city of Birmingham and the state of Alabama. He remains an outspoken advocate for justice speaking out most recently against the verdict in the Trayvon Martin case and the Supreme Court's decision striking down Section 4 of the Voting Rights Act. I am inspired by the words he spoke at a memorial service and wreath laying ceremony in 2012 for the 6 Birmingham youth killed on September 15, 1963. ``In a sense we've crossed a stream," he said, ``but still there are mighty oceans of adversity that lie ahead."

As a direct benefactor of their life's work and sacrifices, it is my honor to recognize the contributions of brothers Rev. Abraham Lincoln Woods, Jr. and Bishop Calvin W. Woods on the floor of the United States House of Representatives. Their contributions have inspired generations. On behalf of a grateful state and nation, we acknowledge these trailblazers and their influence on the progress we have made. The City of Birmingham, the State of Alabama and this entire nation have benefited from their sacrifices and tenacious pursuit of justice. I urge my colleagues to join me in honoring Rev. Abraham Lincoln Woods, Jr. and Bishop Calvin W. Woods.